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ABSTRACT

This language arts lesson designed for grade five involves drama as a focal point in preparing children to write a short story similar to the one they first create through improvisation. Included are the objectives of the lesson, materials, the children's previous experience, the step-by-step procedure with accompanying teacher points, the writing assignment, and questions for the teacher's self-evaluation as well as for the children's evaluation. (KEH)

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Language Arts and Drama

by

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Pamela Davis was a fourth year student in the B'Ed program at the University of Alberta when she designed this lesson.

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- LANGUAGE ARTS LESSON INVOLVING DRAMA -

Grade: 5 Age: 10 year olds
Time: 1-1/2 hours

Objectives:

Students will

* Enrich written vocabulary.
* Demonstrate the ability to improvise and use ideas in a written story.
* Adopt an imaginary role.
* Have their imagination stimulated through the use of a visual aid. (The picture provided).
* Will be given the opportunity to share their ideas and written work. (ie. Posting the completed stories on a wall or reading their stories out loud).

Materials:

* Picture of a pathway leading off somewhere.
* Lined writing paper
* Pencils/erasers
* Desks pushed aside to create a space for dramatization
* Musical triangle to signal 'stop' motion.
* Tape recorder
* Tape cassette -- Windham Hill recordings suggested

Previous Experience:

* For this lesson it is assumed that the children have had previous dramatic experiences in mime and improvisation.
* The children have written short stories.
* The children have had previous experiences in movement education to communicate meanings through gestures; and express emotions through facial expressions

Procedure	Teacher's Points
1. Have the children push their desks to the sides of the room and gather in a small circle in the middle of the room.	1. Classroom management/organization.
2. Show the class the picture: "I will come around to each of you and show you this picture. Please take a good look at it."	2. Get the children to begin to think about what they see.

3. " Go now and find your own space in the room. Lie down ... close your eyes ... and imagine that you are in the picture I have just shown you. Think about it for a moment."

3. Use each question on its own and pause for a while to allow time for thought.

Dim the lights just a bit if possible.
Questions to ask:
a) What kind of character are you?
b) Are you by yourself?
c) Are you on anything or are you in anything? (ie. car)
d) Where did you come from?
e) Where are you going?
f) Do you stay on the pathway?
g) Think of how you feel ... are you happy, sad, lost? Why?
h) Do you meet anything or anyone along the way?

4. "Alright now ... when I give you the signal you will begin your journey. (along the path). When you hear the signal again I would like you all to freeze. Remember to do your improvisation in pantomime."

4. Give the students two to four minutes to go through the improvisation.
* Ask questions when necessary.
* Watch for varying movements and expressions made by the children.

5. Give the signal to begin ... then again for the children to freeze ... "Would everyone now lie down where they are; if you are too close to someone else just move away a bit. Close your eyes." (Pause).

(Put on the music - outdoor type with sounds of the countryside - Dim the lights - Keep the volume low).

5. * Release of any tension.
* Review in their minds what the children did in pantomime.

6. "Without saying a word imagine you are in that picture again. Can you remember: (pause after each question).

* Where you came from?
* Where you were going?
* What you were doing out there anyway?
* What kinds of things, if any did you meet along the way?
* What were you feeling
* What was it like outside?

6. Reflect upon the same kinds of questions asked previously about the picture.

7. "O:K, open your eyes now and slowly sit up. Stretch your arms up and take a deep breath ... relax. Let your arms down and let your air out. Make your ankles go in circles. (Pause) Now move from where you are and come and join me in a circle in the middle of the room." (All sitting).	7. The teacher will facilitate the learning experience. Class discussion: The children will form one large grouping so as to participate in telling their experience as a character in the picture (oral vocabulary). Questions may be asked to elicit elaborate details.
8. Can anyone tell me: *What was off in the distance? Where did the path lead to? *Did anyone come across anything? Did anyone meet anyone? *How were you feeling at that time? *How did you show how you were feeling? *Had you been on this path before; was it familiar or was it a new experience for you? *Was it a long journey you went on? Or was it a short one?	8. *Wait for individual responses. *Discuss what went on in the drama class. *Ask the questions separately so as not to get one child telling his/her whole story. *Point our individual differences. *Get the children to elaborate where possible. *Have students clarify their answers. If you are unsure of an answer, probe for more information. *The children are organizing their ideas from the discussion and being prepared to transfer them to paper.
9. "Let us pull the desks and chairs back to their original spots now and I would like you all to get out your writing pads and pencils."	9. Classroom management/organization
10. "I will post the picture on the front wall and write out some questions on the blackboard. I want you to reflect upon your journey and write a short story about your character in that picture. You will have one hour to write your story.	10. Questions to write on the Board: a) Who or what are you? Describe yourself. b) What are you doing out there? c) Where did you come from and where are you going? d) Do you meet anyone or anything on your journey. e) Do you venture off the path? If so, why? f) Explain your emotions - for example: If you are happy in your story, tell the reader why you are happy. g) Describe the setting (ie.: where you are) so that the reader can picture it in his/her mind.

Writing Assignment

1. Working individually, the children will write a short story similar to the one they have just created through improvisation.

2. Put questions on the board as a guideline.

3. The finished products (their short stories) will either be posted on a story board in the classroom, shared in small groups or presented them in different dramatical forms -- puppets; mime; improvisation.

Evaluation

1. Student Evaluation -- Is the child ...

   * Able to work individually on this project; to use his/her own ideas and put them in written form?
   * Able to communicate through expressions and gestures what he/she is doing on the pathway? (Or what he/she is doing while imagining him/herself as a character in the picture?) Body Awareness.
   * Able to demonstrate the ability to perform a clear transition if there is a change in emotion?
   * Communicate orally and participate in the group discussion?
   * Able to express him/herself through dramatic movement?
   * Able to write a short story about the picture and about what he/she has just expressed in mime?

2. Teacher Evaluation -- Did the teacher...

   * Give clear instructions?
   * Give ample time to let the students sort out their ideas before they move into the mime activity?
   * Include all aspects of the language arts skills? (Reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing).
   * Remain flexible when allowing time for the drama activity and observe which parts of the lesson went smoothly and/or needed improvement?
   * Motivate the students to think imaginatively through the use of a visual aid?

References

Elementary Drama Curriculum Guide. Alberta Education, 1985

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